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ABSTRACT

Early in this century, John Dewey wondered how educators could justify believing in democracy if they did not practice it in schools. This paper presents findings of a study that located the underlying values that support the social construction of democratic praxis in schools. It explored how school leaders in democratic school communities viewed the dialectic relationship between schools and communities and between democratic beliefs and practices, and identified underlying factors that foster democratic practices. Data were derived through action inquiry--a series of interviews with six leaders of seven schools engaged in a network project, interviews with a peer administrator and superintendents in each district, and observation. Standpoint theory was used to examine the human actions that result from human understandings. Findings suggest that school leaders committed to democratic practices understand leadership as an idea, not as a process; exhibit equity in their language and behavior; view "learning together" as school culture; engage in building capacity; and accept the status of "outsider within." The interaction of practitioner and researcher in the participatory research process leads to deeper understanding of embedded notions that limit democratic practices. Suggestions for how leadership is taught in administrator-preparation courses are offered. (Contains 58 references.) (LMI)

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Leadership in Evolving Democratic School Communities

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Leadership in Evolving Democratic School Communities

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Early in this century, John Dewey wondered how educators could justify believing in democracy if they did not practice it in schools (Dewey cited in Koopman, 1943). The practice of democracy in schools is far more than an intellectual expression of beliefs. Actual practice requires the persistent interaction of people, a much more complex task. Even though some educators are actively working to increase the democratic behaviors among the adults in their schools, activating school site councils and engaging in participatory management, many educators are still uncertain (and in some cases, unwilling) to extend the dialogue and influence outside their familiar community. Some school administrators are reported to question whether parents and teachers even want to engage in collaborative efforts to govern schools (Hallinger, Murphy, & Hausman, 1992, Johnson, 1988; Malen & Ogawa, 1988; Reitzug & Cross, 1994; Weiss & Cambone, 1994). These educators identify issues of time, expertise, and political agendas as critical barriers to increasing democratic practices in school (Hallinger, et.al., 1992; Reitzug & Cross, 1994). Other school administators who try to engage the school community in decision-making are reported to use more of a consultative mode rather than a collaborative mode (Easton & Storey, 1994; Sackney & Dibski, 1994). As a result, students, parents, school neighbors and, in some cases, teachers still remain outsiders to the school community.

Democratic Practices in Schools

Dewey actually saw schools as potentially complex democratic organizations. He wrote that "a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience (Dewey, 1916, p. 87). Others echoed Dewey's call to community building within schools, reminding us that for democracy to work effectively, it must be practiced anew by each generation (Giroux, 1988; Giroux, 1992; Goodlad, 1981; Shakeshaft, 1986). I argue that democratic practices in schools mean that schools must be viewed as collections and collaborations of people rather than organizational structures or programs. If Greenfield (1988) was correct, that the school organizations are only are illusions made real through human actions, then only the human actions of the people in organizations can actualize democratic school communities.

It is this human action, the personal and human element of democratic ideals, that often inhibits their practice. According to Follett (1924), the organizational change required for democratic practice to be enacted is an erasing of hierarchical lines and the redeployment of bureaucratic mechanisms. Calebrese (1989; 1990) contended that for schools to be democratic they must follow the norms of justice, equity, inclusion, participation, and integrity. Democratic practices among collections of people, especially practices that erase hierarchy and status or require complex values, may result in less than rational systems. Educators and their communities are not accustomed to less than rational systems.

Historical accounts of other school reform efforts show attempts to redefine bureaucratic systems and rational structures. Community collaborations and local site management framed many of the reform during the 1960's. In his study of the micropolitics of schools during this time, Hoyle (1986) observed that:

> the social world essentially consists of people interacting with each other, negotiating patterns of relationships and constructing a view of the world. In the process of interaction different groups come to see the world differently, to develop different concepts of reality, and to construct different bodies of knowledge. (p. 10)

The lack of success of these earlier attempts to create new constructions of reality point to the complexities that surround democratic practices. In fact, the negotiating of new relationships during the reform efforts of the sixties did not go far before everyone retreated to the rational and recognizable system again.

Political theorists tell us that democracy is very hard work (Schattschneider, 1960). Schattschneider described democracy as a state of mind, having to do with an attitude about self and others with actual practice depending on the willingness of people to do what is necessary to keep the idea going. The idea to be kept going involves the development of a relationship between the opportunity to participate in making decisions and the responsibility to abide by the will of the majority until the decision is changed (Bayles 1960). Suggesting that the aim of democracy was to integrate desires, Follett (1924) said that a true democratic approach is based on mutual influence rather than equal opportunity to gain power over others. She stated, "Democracy does not register various opinions; it is an attempt to create unity" (p. 201). Shattschneider (1960) captured the complexity of the actual praxis when he explained democracy as "a system designed to be sensitive to the needs of ordinary people regardless of whether or not the pedants approve of them" (p. 135), concluding that, at its best, democracy is a collaboration of ignorant people and experts.

As researchers and practitioners report on the progress of school restructuring, there is a growing body of work that suggests democratic practices are not working in schools. In a recent study of democratic praxis in two schools engaged in long-term restructuring effort (Rusch, 1992), I concluded that the espoused values for participation were not congruent with the actual experience of democratic practice for many people in the schools. Others research found that teachers report they do not have voice in important decisions (Johnson, 1988); teacher leaders indicate they are marginalized by their peers (Wasley, 1992); principals and superintendents complain about loss of power and control (Conley, 1991; Murphy, 1994; Rinehart, Short, & Johnson, 1994; Weiss & Cambone, 1994), that teachers and community members have little time to devote to comprehensive decision making processes (Hallenger, et. al., 1992; Reitzug & Cross; Weiss & Cambone, 1994),. or that teachers prefer not to be involved in a whole school perspective (Weiss & Cambone, 1994; Wohlstetter, Smyer, & Mohrman, 1994).

Some studies note that conflict among school community members increases (Easton & Storey, 1994; Reitzug & Cross, 1994; Rinehart, Short, & Johnson, 1994). In fact, community collaboration about the restructuring of schools and schooling can result in a conversation that sounds like a cacophony. The dissonance accompanying current restructuring efforts, whether from ultra-fundamentalist religious groups, privatization proponents, posturing policymakers, debating researchers, or frustrated practitioners is illustrative of how little we know about envisioning collaborative and democratic relationships in this universal system in which we coexist.

Wheatley (1992) suggests that our organizational fortresses and our need for rational control prevents us from turning these paradoxes into relationships. She notes,

> We build them strong and complex because they must, we believe, hold back the dark forces that are out to destroy us. It's a hostile world out there and organizations, or we who create them, survive only because we build crafty and smart--smart enough to defend ourselves from the natural forces of destruction. (p. 16).

She also observes that we are afraid to let things recombine, reconfigure, or speak truthfully to one another because they might fall apart. Our fortresses are closed school doors, minimum attention a systems perspective of schooling and limited interest in or concern for the voice of the community. Blase (1991) found compliance and acquiescence more prevalent in school communication than inclusive democratic processes. As he studied the micropolitical processes necessary for dynamic community interaction, Blase (1988) found that teachers and principals actually worked in congruence to maintain the

image of school as non-controversial, stable, efficient, and unproblematic. None of those attributes contribute to democratic process within school communities.

A few school communities appear to be making visible progress in aligning their beliefs with democratic practices. Early research on Chicago's efforts at site-based governance describe successful site managed schools as those engaged in more democratic and inclusionary processes with their community (Bradley, 1993; Easton & Storey, 1994). Lewin's Accelerated Schools (Conley, 1993) and Slavin's Success for All schools (Slavin, Madden, Shaw, Mainzer, & Donnelly, 1993) are also grounded in connections with family and community. Fullan (1993), in his recent review of the actualization of learning communities, cites the success of the Comer schools: collaborations of families, teachers, and academics who have worked together for 25 years "to turn around one of the most debilitating and negative school situations to be found" (p. 94). He points out that partnerships must have an essential fluidity to be successful:

> . . . it is clear that learning organizations will have to be able to form and reform a variety of alliances simultaneously and over time. Particular collaboratives would end; others would start up. Only an active sense of moral purpose and the continual acquisition of the skills of change agentry will make it possible to be an effective partner, and to navigate this territory, staying on course even when the rest of the environment doesn't seem to be cooperating. (p. 97)

The educators in this study came together as participants in a statewide network grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education grant from the Secretary's Fund for Innovation in Education. The network established a reciprocal research relationship (Lather, 1991) among practitioner, university scholars, and state policy makers to develop a broader and more useful research base on schools engaged in restructuring.

Several factors pointed to these schools as quality sites for research on democratic practices. First, site-based management was a standard governance process in all schools; their experience ranged between 4-10 years of participatory practices. Second, staff members at each site engaged in persistent reflection about changing roles and responsibilities within their governance structures; these conversations included attention to the values of democratic practice. Third, the educators in the network agreed that all research with university scholars must be of a participatory or reciprocal nature; they were only interested in data collection that could be returned to the site for tranformative purposes. For example, the study of democratic praxis was actually used by all Network members to gain insights into the participatory practices in their own schools (Rusch, 1994). Observing principals and site-team members actively using research data to enhance their own theoretical and practical understandings of democratic behaviors in schools, I

became curious about the values and behaviors of school leaders who supported the development and practice of democratic principles in their school communities. Their actions appeared to support what Gutman (1988) called a conscious social construction of democratic practices. In a call for more empirical evidence on the effects of democracy or participatory practices in schools, she proposed studies that examine the sense of social commitment, political efficacy, and conflict and communication. Other researchers and theorists concurred, asking for knowledge about the deep structures of participatory practices (Blase, 1991; Imber & Duke, 1984; Hoyle, 1986; Johnson, 1988).

In order to build a collaboration of ignorant people and experts, to increase collective action and mutual influence, and to maintain a willingness to keep the idea going, I posited that democratic practices in schools must include a set of values that lead to specific practices for all participants in the school community. Because these network sites had sustained participatory practices for an extended time and because there was persistent reflection on the congruence of espoused values and actualized behaviors, the people in these schools were excellent sources for a reciprocal learning process. This research study was then designed to locate the underlying values that supported the social construction of democratic praxis in schools. Questions addressed included:

1) How do school leaders in collaborative and democratic school communities view the dialectical relationship of schools and communities, of democratic beliefs and democratic practices?

2) What are the underlying factors that foster and sustain democratic practices within a school community?

3) What are the implications for the education of leaders of school communities engaged in democratic practices?

The paper begins with the theoretical perspectives that influenced the research process and a description of the study design. That is followed by an introduction to the school leaders who participated in the study and the emergent understandings about these school leaders. Finally, after a discussion of the findings, I detail the implications for university educators.

Theoretical Perspective

The sites engaged in the network project already had a history of asking questions of themselves, of engaging in action research as a part of their decision-making process for school improvement. As a part of building a long-range plan for school improvement, each site committed to participatory action research while working with the Northwest Regional

Laboratory's Onward to Excellence Program. The internal benefits of the action research process created a foundation for collaborative research efforts with external participants and as a result, the site teams in the network continued to view research as a valuable piece of their school improvement effort. There was much they wanted to know. In fact, these schools refused to affiliate with any external researcher who would not return data and findings to them for study and dialogue. Not only did these educators want an emancipatory research process (Eisner, 1985; Mumby, 1988; Sirotnik, 1986), they required their research partners to engage in reciprocal learning. If their practice was to inform theory, then the emergent theory had to inform their practice and the practice of the researchers.

The standards set by the network schools matched my own feminist principles of collaborative research. I believed that if the questions we agreed to ask and the strategies we agreed to use in the asking represented a commitment to learn together, some of the power relationships that traditionally govern research would be more equalized. I believed that no matter what perspective any of us brought to the inquiry, the resulting dialogue between the researcher and researched provided a new set of meanings for both of us.

Using methods that preserves the position of the subjects as knowers and actors in the research is supported by many feminist researchers who decry the alienation of human beings from the institution (Lather, 1991; Sirotnik, 1986; Smith, 1987; Smith, 1990; Smith, 1985). They promote the use of critical and reflective inquiries that recognize that "the critical dynamic at all levels of schooling must be examined where they come together at the school level" (p.10). Smith (1990) described this form of inquiry as investigating "the on-going coordinated practices of actual people" (p. 62).

The study of socially situated knowledge, the production of meaning that informs, influences, or inhibits actions among people, is known as standpoint theory. Standpoint theory sets out to expose the limits set on human understanding by human actions (Harding 1991; Hartsock 1987; Smith, 1987). In other words, human decisions "shape and constrain what we can know" (Harding, 1991, p. 120). According to Smith (1990):

> from this standpoint, we know the everyday world through the particularities of our local practices and activities, in the actual places of our work and the actual time it takes. In making the everyday world problematic we also problematize the everyday localized practices of the objectified forms of knowledge organizing our everyday worlds. (p. 28)

Standpoint theory, in this study, assisted all the participants in examining the socially constructed meanings that either supported or inhibited democratic practices in schools. Standpoint theory looks at the human actions that result from human

understandings, recognizing that in schools the organizational understandings and actions about democracy are more than an individual's bias or position of interest.

Research Process

Designing a research process that reflected the ideals of democratic practice was a key part of this study. The methodolody for this study was guided by Torbert's (1991) action inquiry, which he describes as "consciousness in the midst of action (p. 221). Researchers engaged in this methodology view it as emancipatory research in that it openly recognizes, in fact promotes, the concept of transforming people and organizations through the research process (Eisner, 1985; Mumby, 1988). This methodology tends to blur the lines between the researcher and study participants and recognizes that each of us is learning and modifying our knowing as we question and respond to questions about our daily lives. This form of participatory research actually exploits the blurred experience and attempts to capture and bring forward the modified understandings of both the researcher and the researched.

I argue that this methodology is highly appropriate in the context of restructuring schools, restructuring roles, and restructuring understandings of leadership theory because it is grounded in democratic praxis. In Follett's early work on democratic practices (1924), she advanced the notion of mutual influence, suggesting that experts and people listening to experts had to commit to learning with each other rather than one from the other. Taking the position that the notion of expert was a serious barrier to participation and communication, she promoted the exploitation of influence, stating:

> people are influencing each other all the time. Instead of that influence being casual, we should be able to make more of it; there is much divergence going to waste. We must free the way, create the conditions, for the productive relating of human beings. (p. 226)

Today, numerous qualitative researchers promote this notion of mutual influence. Lather talks about a "praxis oriented approach to inquiry" which seeks to break down the elitist notion that only the researcher can interpret and create credible meaning from data that informs the construction of knowledge (Lather, 1991, p. 85). "Member-checking" and "negotiated outcomes" are key elements of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lather (1991) also contends that forms of mutual influence increase face validity of naturalistic research processes as descriptions and interpretations are recycled back through subsets of research participants.

The fundamental rules that governed knowledge construction about the network schools was negotiated at a 1991 meeting of principals and site council chairs. We agreed

that all research designs would be mutually negotiated with member schools having equal influence on research questions and research processes. In addition it was agreed that all research studies conducted in network schools would be participatory in nature with data made available to site councils for study purposes. Researchers also agreed to present data and provide interpretations on request to staff meetings in order to enhance their restructuring efforts. In addition, all members of the Network agreed to group reviews of individual research efforts in order to gain better insights into the dynamics within schools that influenced a major change process. This feedback loop presented a unique opportunity for this research design to emerge.

This study then was designed to explore the reciprocal relationship of theory and practice using an interactive process with data. Using the conclusion of the earlier study (Rusch, 1992), initial data were collected during a 1992 retreat of principals and site-team members. Following a presentation of the data, the 25 participants representing 6 schools discussed their understanndings of democratic practice within changing organizations. This discussion was recorded and transcribed. After coding this data, a new set of interview questions was derived and 2 interviews were conducted with all participants at their school sites during 1993 and 1994. An additional set of questions was constructed for administrator interviews conducted at 6 month intervals between 1993 and 1994. To attain the multiple perspective in the study, interviews, using the same questions, took place with superintendents and a peer administrator in each district. Finally, each participant was shadowed for a full day and a final interview was conducted focusing on the emergent cross-case themes that appeared to inform the development of the participant's democratic practices in schools.

This paper represents an analysis of the multiple perspectives of this process. At each stage, from group, to individual, to school site, to group, the interpretations of data were enhanced and honed by the critical receivers of the knowledge. The active use of cross-site groups to interact with the data was particularly useful in establishing face validity and catalytic validity (Lather, 1991). Recognizing the limitations of single interpretations of complex human interactions, face validity was increased by bringing the data and initial interpretations back to a group of the respondents. Catalytic validity (Reason & Rowen, 1981) is the incorporation of the group data discussions into the transformative processes of individual sites. For example, after talking about the age and experience discrimination that was marginalizing a prominent group of staff members in the initial study, the Network group formed a new perspective on the notions of resistance and the visible behaviors of older staff members. These actions not only challenge the notion of researcher neutrality, they also challenge the ability of the researcher to remain objective

and distant from the real human interactions that evolve from research conclusions. Catalytic validity evokes researcher responsibility for quality interpretation because results truly affect human behavior.

The data consist of approximately 215 hours of interviews. Using a constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), all interviews were read and coded with conceptual labels as they were completed. Each group of interviews was then compared for common and disparate themes. The emergent conceptual themes then informed the network dialogue, which, in turn, informed the next set of interview questions. This participatory or reciprocal process of analyzing data was a form of axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (p. 96). Finally, for this study, all interviews of each individual were reviewed over time for consistency or inconsistency of themes. This selective coding process ((Strauss & Corbin, 1990) framed a narrative of values that support democratic practices in schools. The narrative was the centerpiece for the "member checking" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) dialogue with the research participants in February, 1994. The narrative also informed the interviews conducted with superintendents and administrative peers outside the research study. This final set of interviews was coded and used to verify and solidify the emerging theory about democratic praxis in school settings.

Research Participants

A study of 2 network schools completed earlier (Rusch, 1992) provided the baseline data for this research. This in-depth case study of an elementary and secondary school revealed that participatory practices were dramatically affecting the way people in the school thought about relationships in their workplace. Traditional, and supposed insurmountable barriers, were challenged or ignored. Conversations across disciplines, grade levels, and role responsibilities increased. How principals talked about staff, how teachers discussed students, how staff members talked about colleagues and relationships, how staff members view the relationship of parents to school, was a departure from most literature about the micropolitics of schools. As network participants reviewed and discussed the research findings, I proposed to move beyond this study and trace applications of our findings in other network schools. The participants include administrators from 2 high schools, a middle school, 2 elementary schools, and a K-12 alternative school. A brief description of each participant follows:

School Leader A: At the outset of this project, this man had just taken on the leadership of a K-12 alternative school, his third administrative assignment in a mid-sized urban district. The school had a 25 year reputation for student self-direction, participatory practices, and parent involvement, but the school community was focused more on independence rather than interdependence. He frequently refers to Puck from Midsummers Night Dream as his metaphor for leading groups of people to a new understanding about schooling: "Puck is a kind of gadfly, always injecting himself and moving the action along, but he's not doing the action." To bring new viewpoints to this staff, he connected them with new colleagues from the network; the dialogue that emerged--alternative schoolers talking with educators interested in designing alternative schooling brought new credibilty and new understandings about collaborative processes to this staff.

This administrator frequently brings forward his Jesuit background and his youthful attempts to challenge racism in the South as keys to his commitment to educate all children. Those commitments come out in passionate statements about children's potential, in delightful stories about encounters with precocious students, and in open emotion about educators who do not care about potent outcomes for students. He is an avid student of educational theory and philosophy and persistently accesses current research to better understand the dilemmas of connecting the community. Now in his 19th year with the district, he is directing the 21st Century Schools project, working with all schools to implement state-legislated reforms. Reflecting on his new role he says,

> What I believe about leadership is to convince people how powerful they are. The only real change that ever occurs is when people have internalized it and understand that they can do it--not that I can make them do it. Heck, I'm the director of the state's largest district and I still don't believe in telling people what to do. What I believe is creating an environment that lets people step forward with what they have to offer.

School Leader B: This principal is just completing his 10th year in a comprehensive high school of 1250 students that no longer matches the traditional secondary model. When he arrived at this high school, he began a conversation about what a high school diploma should really mean. Concerned about a high dropout rate, a low post-high school schooling rate, a disaffected "middle," and a high discipline rate, this principal suggested that they talk about all students doing better. With gradual planning and piloting, and operating on a full consensus model of decision making, this school no long has traditional sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Working with a performance based learning system, students must demonstrate their knowledge and skills using appropriate and integrated content in order to move forward. since 1986, the dropout rate took a nosedive, daily attendance climbed to 96%, and student attendance in post high school institutions went

from 34% to 95%. The principal points to this accomplishment as a triumph for everyone noting, "We're finally reaching the middle--those kids who go through school that are fairly passive, do their work, and are happy with their B's and C's, but not really developing the skills that will be valuable to them later on."

In classrooms you find long-term teachers who clearly articulate why they invested time and personal effort in dramatic changes in their work life. Others describe why his school community engages with this school leader in this complex effort:

> . . . his relationship skills, his ability to work with other people, and to not get into big community fights has to do with his clarity of purpose,his ability to state and be true to what it is that he is trying to accomplish, his absolute willingness to listen and take seriously what other people think and also his willingness to change, change direction, change course, change his mind--to not do something if there is a good reason. So I think people trust him because he is trustworty.

The career of this school leader, who is about to retire, has been very diverse. He moved from teaching to the military, back to teaching. Then just for diversity he entered private business for several years and followed that experience with several years as a community college instructor. Invited to come to this high school as principal, he shared his surprise at the invitation, but put it on a plane with all his other career choices, "It looked like an interesting thing to do." Personally he is a quiet and unassuming man who patiently shares his thinking with all who ask. Confronted with the successes in his school, he responds, "I don't see myself as a change master; I'm just someone helping with the change process." Then he puts on his sneakers and proceeds to the football field where he still coaches the offensive team.

School Leader C: This man is completing his fourth year as the principal of this comprehensive high school of 1750 students. An example of the challenging dynamics of change in an "excellent" school, the culture is described as "an alternative school in a tuxedo," meaning that the staff is struggling to define a new vision of schooling in a school community that has awards, achievements, and high success with a visible and vocal student populations. While serving as the curriculum vice principal, he noticed that student demographics were changing rapidly and he began to question whether their traditional excellent program was meeting the needs of all students.

As he works to educate a traditional community about change, he frequently draws on his background as an historian and likens the task to town meetings. When site-based governance appeared on the professional horizen, he looked at his school improvement team and knew they already had a model in progress. As traditional roles of department

chairs were complicated by new governance structures, he worked collaboratively to redefine those roles. One department chair observed, "In 23 years no one has ever asked me what I thought I should be doing as a chair. I finally feel like what I do has value." This chair not only postponed his pending retirement; he now serves as the school's site chair.

This principal did not seek his job; his colleagues turned in his application the last day because he was reticent to leave the vice principalship: "I loved that job." That expression comes into every description of every position this man has filled: 8th grade teacher, department chair, district curriculum director. Asked about his career path, he says he has none. "I trust that the next position will find me; I just want to do the best I can with the one I am doing now." Asked about all the awards and grants the school has garnered, he says, "They belong to the staff."

As modest as he is about his work, he is passionate about the need for change in schooling. With a futuristic orientation, he predicts that we won't recognize schools in another decade. Then he races off to meet with one of the new interdisciplinary work groups that have replaced traditional departments in this high school.

School Leader D: Beginning with a National School of Excellence in 1989, this middle school has enough awards to last a lifetime. As she lists them off, the principal reminds me that these awards would not exist if it weren't for the people in her school. "I found so much potential here when I came; I couldn't believe no one had ever turned these people loose before." Introducing site councils, house models, and integrated curriculum designs, she faciliated a road to recognition that has not stopped for 6 years.

Yet, the school community saw that first indicator of excellence as only the beginning of achievement. This middle school exemplifies the praxis of a community school. Eight years ago, this principal's first assignment was to a school she describes as "neglected." "I think they put me here because people at the district office thought the school would be closed soon." Her response was to reach out to the community and attach a public library threatened with closure by city budget cuts. Now a multitude of ages and sizes are found with their heads together at the computerized search terminals. The person asking for more silence may be a grandfather instead of the teacher; the volunteers at the checkout desk might represent several decades.

Building on interactive alliances with business and industry partners in the neighborhood, staff in this school modified the learning experiences for students to maximize the integration and application of isolated facts, concepts, and skills. The principal is fierce in her determination to improve the learning experiences for children by

connecting school with the community. "I invited our Rotary to school to shadow our kids; they couldn't believe what they saw. They had no idea about the capacity of our kids and now they're willing to talk about shadowing, about civic projects, about partnerships."

School Leader E: This K-5 elementary school is the smallest of 10 elementary schools in a mid-sized university community. Located on the outskirts of town, "we're the little school that everyone forgets," comments the principal. Recently scheduled to close because of low enrollment, the school grew by a classroom/year since 1988. That growth changed the staff and the school population. Encroaching poverty now qualifies over 20% of students for free or reduced rate lunches and burgeoning ethnic and national diversity added students from 10 different countries ranging from Yemen to Taiwan.

The school gets state-wide attention for their progress in implementing multi-age ungraded primary programs. The degree of parent and student involvement in their restructuring conversation is notable. Five years ago, this was a different school. After 15 years with a traditional top-down style principal, this group of educators saw themselves as "a family" and resisted the idea of site-based governance. By 1993, one of those same staff members noted that the "site committee is very capable of making 95% of the decisions in our school." Their leadership council now includes teaching staff, parents, classified employees, and the principal. Using a consensus model, the council is responsible for all building decisions including budget allocations and spending decisions.

Never intending to be a principal after working with the entire district contingency as the assistent to the superintendent, she reluctantly took on the challenge of this small school. She talks about "never seeing a model of a principal that I wanted to be--all those games and politics." In her first year, she took a stand that "all of us were going to work together to make Riverside a better school for children. I wasn't just going to do my job and they [the staff] were going to do theirs; we were really going to work together." Ignoring the staff reluctance, she persisted. Gradually building a dialogue about student outcomes and new teaching practices, she loaded their mailboxes with readings, held discussion groups instead of faculty meetings, and started "parent learning meetings" for math problem solving. "We just became a learning school," one teacher noted. When some community members began to object to the direction of the school reforms, she organized an "Outcomes For Skeptics" class and only committed skeptics were invited to register. They came, they learned together, and now they support the school. Currently a state pilot site, a much awarded and oft visited school, this principal suggests that she's only just begun to learn what children, teachers, and parents can accomplish when they work together.

School Leader F To talk to this long-term school leader, you must be prepared for numerous interruptions. Several of our interviews were conducted on playgrounds as she took "children with an overabundance of energy" on their frequent breaks so classroom learning could proceed for the larger group. The phone rings frequently with calls from community agencies who collaborate with the school and the bilingual secretary interrupts with a need for policy interpretation. "I get so frustrated with policies and practices that were designed for traditional Ozzie and Harriet families; I have children living in cars and I'm supposed to figure out where their car is parked before I let them come to our school. Well, I just let them in. I figure 3 good days at our school may make a lifetime of difference for someone. Who cares where their car is parked."

Pushing boundaries and challenging rules is this principal's standard behavior as she continues to respond to the needs of all children for an education. Now in her thirty-second year, her career has placed her in kindergarten, in powerful district level positions, and in schools that no one wants to lead. "I never worry what level anything is at; I just do the job, " is her explanation of a very non-linear career.

Despite the flurry around her in school, she is viewed by colleagues as a very quiet and introspective person. "She rarely talks at administrator meetings, but when she does, the entire room listens. People know when she decides to contribute something, it will be well-thought out, very powerful, very right, and we'd better do it!"

The school leaders in this study are exceptional educators whose lives have found their way to the files in my mind and my teaching repertoire, yet they are educators whose stories are seldom found in texts about leading schools. This then represents an attempt to bring their production of meaning to the forefront, to inform and influence human actions in complex school settings.

Findings and Discussion

The findings reported here are emergent understandings, are consistent across all participants in the study, and are supported with evidence from all interviews.

•School leaders commited to democratic practices understand leadership as an idea, not a person. They reject the notion of centrality of the principal for quality outcomes in their school community and espouse egalitarian values within the school.

Language that promotes and supports cooperation and collaboration is abundant in these schools. The conversations of the principals over time reflected a persistent use of the word "we." A high school principal explained his attitude about collaboration by telling

me that "collectively we are alot smarter than any one person in this school." One outside colleague observed,

> What you hear from Constance [a pseudonym] is not 'I did this'; it is 'we are working on this'. She doesn't say 'my teachers'; her language is more 'we are a team' and 'we are not there and we probably never will be there but we are going to continue to work on it'.

This strong sense of "we-ness" was evident among all the administrators in this study; individuals only described success in terms of a group experience. An elementary principal said, "I don't see myself blazing a trail someplace, but I really see myself helping others do that." Another principal described her recent Milken Award as belong to this entire building: "I wouldn't be recognized for anything if it weren't for this group of people."

The notion of being part of the group is also a constant among all the administrators in this study. Teachers verified the principals viewpoints with statements like: "She never really acts like a principal; she's just one of us." Principals described their role as that of creating a whole building of leaders. One principal stated she'd much rather have a whole building of leaders than a whole building of followers. Based on the emerging dynamics of many leaders in her school, she believed it was much more fun. One very experienced principal wondered, over the years, how many potential leaders he had missed by operating in a less collaborative manner.

The fine lines of authority and influence described as a tightrope walk (S. Conley, 1988) did not appear to be a factor in these schools. Instead there was more of an egalitarian ethos. The concept of power was always a baffling query for these school leaders. They would look at me quizzically, tell me they weren't into power, talk about the power of the group, wrestle with comfort or discomfort with the term, and finally give up trying to respond to my questions. Asked how he handled the "supposed loss of power" once full-scale site councils were in operation, a high school principal laughed and responded, "Doesn't bother me abit"! He went on to describe the sensibility of diffused leadership in large and disparate organizations like high schools. In his view, he was only 1 of 125 adults trying to educate 1750 students.

• School leaders commited to democratic practices have a value for equity that is highly visible in their language and their behavior.

There was evidence that each of these school leaders had openly taken positions on equity issues during early stages in their career. Stories ranged from struggles for racial equality in Alabama to struggles for race and class in Alaska. Several men and women in

the group maintain their activism in the struggle for gender equity in the principalship. Two of the principals persistently address issues of poverty, race, and class in their current assignments. As the research process moved into group analysis, the participants' comfort with discussion of equity was extraordinary. These behaviors differ greatly from those found by Anderson (1990) and Kempner (1991) in studies that reported administrators viewed equity issues as no problem. In fact, the values about equity in schools related to gender, race, and class among all participants was congrent with the questions raised and the practices observed in all individual schools.

The findings also supported studies that suggested educators in schools engaged in site-based decision-making define a fundamental value about inclusion in their restructuring conversation (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991; Goldman, Dunlap, & Conley, 1993). For instance, after the initial study (Rusch, 1992) in two sites indicated that the establishment of site teams didn't insure participation for everyone, these principals convened groups of teachers, support staff, students, and parents with the intent of increasing participation. Parents, students, and classified staff were added to site councils 2 years before a state requirement took effect. One principal talked about the powerful contributions a custodian was making to the site council, noting that he was helping staff understand community connections differently. The custodian was elected the site council chair the next year. The inclusion of parents and students was viewed as a positive element. One teacher noted that middle school students had a great deal to offer to their discussion on curriculum and instruction and that parents on the council "brought a new business-like behavior to our meetings." The school leaders descibed this a "fluid leadership," with influence moving among many members of the school community.

Values for equity and inclusion were also disrupting traditional leadership roles in buildings. For instance, having long-term experience and the status of department chair was no longer a guarantee of influence and decision-making power in the high schools. With the fostering of site councils, the ability to organize, appear learned, and engage support became a key to gaining influence in the school. Less-experienced staff discovered they had equal influence and authority to try new ideas beyond their individual classrooms. Principals frequently talked about leadership surprises in the process.

> "I had one teacher who transferred here that was known for having 'retired' years ago. That first year we just all tried to make her feel welcome and before I knew it she had taken on the mentoring of a new teachers, and then she volunteered for one of the research teams and I couldn't believe what I was seeing."

Each principal had similar stories: people who unexpectedly came forward and provided remarkable contributions to the process. When asked to explain, one outside observer captured the essence of many responses:

> She has developed people on her staff that are leaders, not people that want to be administrators, but leaders that feel really valued and good about themselves. They have stature with, not only their own building, but around the state and also within the district.

•School leaders who sincerely engage in shared decisionmaking view "learning together" as the culture of the school. They define their leadership role as "always teaching," frequently finding guidance from previous teaching experiences to understand the complexities of working with school community issues.

The most powerful theme in all the interviews was connected to teaching. When defining their view of leadership or describing their roles in changing school organizations, each principal consistently referred to their teaching background. When describing their teaching background, each of them expressed a passion or "love" for the task. At one time, each of them made a similar statement to one from an elementary principal: "I always thought I would do nothing but teach kindergarten. I just really connected to those kids and loved the freshness and watching the wonder and the meaning come together."

Two principals began their career as kindergarten teachers and often likened restructuring to a kindergarten classroom. "You organize learning centers and help children explore and make messes and then you teach them how to organize and clean up. And then you take a nap!" A teacher in this school verified the experience, commenting, "Her power is in teaching other people." A high school principal frequently used his background as a history teacher to build metaphors for the human behavior in a changing organizations, describing the task (teaching students and teaching staff) as working to build passion for a subject that not everyone loved. The middle school principal often brought up her background in special education to describe how she was working with reluctant school community members. Another high school principal discussed his years as a coach, noting that successful coaches work as a team. He recalled, "The most important part of the game was the day after when all the coaches gathered in my living room to review the films. There was no status there. We all analyzed everything and helped each other figure out what to do next week." He viewed his role as principal as just another Sunday analysis session, with his whole school community trying to figure out what to do next week.

The joy expressed over watching young learners succeed was paralleled by the principals' pleasure at the growth and development of their staff members. Each had stories about unique moments when the learning levels of their school teams became

visible. But the impact of the learning in these schools was captured by one superintendent who said,

> We are learning on a broader scale that if you allow professionals to engage themselves in making decisions on behalf of kids, they don't go off the deep end. They do stay on rational ground and schools do get better. They don't get weird and they don't get worse. They get better.

•School leaders committed to democratic principles engage in building capacity rather than building empires. The free flow of information and the openness of conversation equalizes access to power and influence in these school communities. The emergent value is that the power of the team is greater than the power of the individual. This is the value that begins to govern their connections with the wider community.

The data support other studies that note the extensive use of data in school communities engaged in restructuring (Goldman, 1993; Snyder, Ancover, & Snyder, 1994) The difference in these schools is the degree to which the data and all other pertinent information are shared with the school community. Each of these principals are data omnivores. They express interest and find value in standardized test scores, school profiles, school comparison data, and graduate follow-up data. The secondary schools in the study collect student, teacher, staff, parent, and community surveys every year, organize the data across the constituencies by theme, display the results in a 5 year pattern, and publish the results in a booklet that is used by the site council and all staff. This publication is readily available to central administrators and the press. In another high school, you may find parents in hallways, stopping students for quick "customer-service" interviews.

Action research is also an emergent activity in these schools. As they engage in new, and somewhat untested practices, they carefully construct action research projects for verification of improved student outcomes. This active gathering of data and careful study of student outcomes is openly shared with parents. For some teachers this conscientious use of school-based research became the one force that convinced them to change their practices and attitudes. One long-term teacher who said she was very resistent to change said, "At this school we don't just change for change's sake; we base what we do on research. We read other poeple's research, but then we go on and design our own just so we really know whether this is good for children."

•School leaders who are successful at democratic practices are humble and unassuming individuals. They have no value for charisma, prominence, or promotion. This combination of attributes supports their risk-taking behaviors.

One intriguing pattern across all the cases was the lack of career aspirations in these school leaders and the uniqueness of career patterns. Each of them described the joy and personal satisfaction they found in teaching and were surprised when they were asked to consider leadership roles. Personal confidence to succeed as school principals varied. Two looked at the task and said, "I can do that," and five couldn't imagine why anyone believed they could do the task, but trusted their learning capacity. They all remembered "sheer panic" the first day they walked into the principal's role. Their careers tend to be unplanned; they express the same joy and satifaction in each role they take on and express surprise at any new opportunity they are offered. Several have moved "up and down" the traditional leadership ladder, taking powerful central office roles and then returning to principalships. They do not view this role change as "moving up or down." They describe it as "trying something new."

Each of them have a significant number of awards and professional recognitions. (4 state principal's of the year; 2 awarded principal of year by Associated Industries; a Milken Award; 3 national principals of year; 5 National Schools of Excellence; 1 principal a regular on the US Secretary of Education Teleconference panel) but all of them eshew the prominance. One principal, on hearing she'd won statewide recognition, objected to the attention. "Why are you doing this? I'm not where I want to be yet!"

Status quo is not an option for these school leaders. But as they helped each other with new ideas, there was also never a hint of competition among them. They frequently spoke about the benefits working in a networked situation that was devoid of the competition they found within their own districts. They talked easily with one another about their pilot programs, new ideas, action research results, and occasional failures. As time went on, network meetings became mixed groups of people working on one another's school redesigns. One of the most profound comments in all my interviews came from a vice principal said, "Achieving excellence is not about a competition to be better; it is about collaboration to find multiple pathways to teaching and learning for adults and students."

The importance of individual context was clear to them, "You're never going to have two school alike. You change based on the needs of children in your school and the needs of your community." But they worry about their community, and frequently discussed the risks of the changes they were engaged in, wondering if they were making good choices for children. Yet none of them ever suggested stopping the learning cycle. During one focus session the topic turned to job security for principals who risk cutting-edge restructuring. The shortest term principal captured the mood of the entire group when

he finally said, "You know, I've stopped worrying about job security. I think it's an illusion anyway. If I can't do what I believe in, tell me how that is security."

•Schools that evolve into democratic communities engage in conflict. School leaders in these communities accept and understand conflict as an essential element of building capacity. Differences abound in their school communities, but the meeting of differences moves from a focus on personality to a focus on issues, from a focus on problems, to a focus on solutions from a focus on personal differences to a focus on philosophical disagreements.

Conflict is considered a normal and healthy part of the process in these schools. Open dialogue is a regular event in these sites and face-to-face meeting of differences is frequently fostered by data collected at the site. In fact, data collection and use of research is clearly a prized activity in each of these schools. Each high school sends out yearly surveys to parents, students, and staff and compiles all data into a school profile. The profiles are available to any interested community member, shared with staff, students, and parents for serious review and planning, and given to the press. "We don't see any reason to hide what is happening in our school; we know we're not perfect, but we're making progress in many areas and we have data that show our work," notes the principal.

One elementary principal spends time educating her staff on the grief process so as they move through personal and group conflicts, they can reflect openly on their feelings and behaviors. Another principal organized an Outcomes Class for Skeptics and opened enrollment to educator and non-educators who could prove they were skeptics.

As students and parents became active members of site councils, principals and teachers openly acknowledge the value of the increased dialogue. There is no evidence in any school that the work of these site councils is trivial or unimportant. No principal complains about loss of power and control. In fact, across the cases, there is consistent evidence of mutual influence and the integration of desires (Follett ,1924), p. 201)

•The core value that governs the praxis of these administrators is the ethic of care.

In all cases, the central focus of these school leaders is on children. The strength of that commitment emerges frequently in open emotion as they talk about the needs of children in crisis and the awesome potential of every child. People who do not see the potential in children are incomprehensible to these administrators.

This ethic also governs how they view the application of policies and practices; they frequently respond by asking a Foucoult style question: "We know what we do, we know

why we do what we do, but do we know what we do does?" They think beyond the application of policy, reflecting and applying critical analysis --they do not shy away from moral dilemmas and frequently make choices that they will get forgiveness for rather than permission because it is the "right thing to do."

Their schools do not lack order or discipline but they have a strong belief that schools that practice caring relationships for children, for staff, and for community will result in increasingly self-discipline and civilized environments. Their internal school data confirm their beliefs. The high schools are powerful examples of the success of relational models of administration. In 4 years of visits, I have never witnessed long lines of students referred to vice principals for disciplinary reasons. Elementary and middle school personnel view student behavior as a minor issue in their schools.

•In order to sustain the culture of democratic praxis in their school communities, these school leaders accept the status of "outsider within," a descriptor applied by Collins (1991) to individuals who chooses to refuse full insider status and, as a result, do not internalize the dominant world view nor further the culture in ways prescribed by that culture. When the creative tension between insider and outsider perspectives is maintained, it can help reveal the embedded assumptions of the dominant culture.

These school leaders are very forthright about their lack of colleagues within the profession; they talk about being "at a very different place than the rest of the principals in the organization," of "feeling isolated among my fellow principals," of "my notion of what a school should be doesn't seem to jive with what my superiors' notion of what a school should be." They are not without respect among peers; in fact, in most cases, the superintendent views these individuals as a critical friend or as one colleague put it, "part of my brain." Yet colleagues acknowledge that these individuals as "someone who "goes to the beat of her own drummer," as someone "who is removed from the everyday drivel of what we do." The school leaders talk about being outside the golf groups, the Friday after hours crowd, the conference party group. At the end of the first network gathering, one principal expressed the joy of the gathering by stating, "This is the first time in my 25 year career that I've found professional friends." Peers who are friends suggest that fear drives the marginalization, fear that the equity and excellence standards maintained by these individuals will become standard expectations for peers as well.

These school leaders are risk-takers (e. g. implement new programs before they are popular), they do exhibit vulnerability and openness within their school communities, and they forego the need for the security and power of their positions or the rewards of upward mobility. Their understanding of leadership is very "other-centered" and according to one principal, "my colleagues don't get that."

Despite some blatent marginalization and some heart-felt professional isolation, these individual maintain their values and vision and long-term careers (16-32 years). None of them feel a lack of respect or express despair at the lack of comradeship. If anything, they use the lack of insider status as an advantage, to ignore internal politics and games. "He's above that," one superintendent commented. One elementary principal noted that by not being connected to the "in group" gave her much more time to concentrate on important things. She regarded all the politics and gaming among her colleagues as "just silly and not the least bit helpful to children."

•The interaction of practitioner and researcher in the participatory research process leads to deeper questioning of embedded notions that limit democratic practices. By embedded notions, I refer to the deep structures of hierarchy and patriarchy, deep structures of gender, class, race, age, and experience that influence the education of school leaders and concomitantly govern actions and experiences in schools. By engaging in a shared learning experience, both professional educators and university educators become exposed to the myths that dominant power structures impose on people. Many silenced voices begin to emerge, thus creating opportunity for the reframing of knowledge and action in school communities and university curriculum and instruction.

When we examine the values that undergird the learning experiences in these schools for everyone in the school community, the visible democratic attributes that govern who is expert, who has access, what represents status, and how power and truth converge is a very powerful lesson. As I examined the attributes that assign these individual to "outsider within" status, I wonder how we can educate school leaders in ways that bring these values and behaviors to the center.

Conclusion

I conclude this paper with questions that affect my own praxis as a university educator of school administrators. First, the most powerful lesson of this research is that the actual praxis of democracy does require that we be sensitive to the needs of ordinary people regardless of whether or not the pedants approve of them" (Shattschneider,1960, p. 135). We must, I contend, ask how the leadership learned and taught in administrative preparation programs contributes to school administrators understanding that "leadership is always dependent on the context, but the context is established by the relationships we value" (Wheatley, p. 144). Too often the leadership taught and learned comes in quadrants, frames, and levels, leading most administrators to believe their role is to create flow diagrams, organizational charts, and situational responses to an individual behavior or a momentary need. We must ask how we construct and model valued relationships within

our own context and how our courses and instructional approaches contribute to a value for the inclusive and democratic linkages between schools, families, and communities.

Second, collaboration rather than competition is something we teach about in our university administrative training programs, but something we model less well. I do not suggest that university educators are not collaborating with their public school partners. But I do suggest that those collaborations are not necessarily reciprocal. University educators are rewarded for their research efforts on schools that are restructuring. Many of those research effort are sincere efforts to research "with" schools rather than "about" schools. But few of those research efforts on school restructuring are having impact on restructuring university classrooms. The curriculum, instruction, and assessment our adult students encounter rarely reflect the content in our courses on school change.

Third, as we instruct aspiring school administrators about the importance of democratic and participatory practices in school communities, I suggest it behooves us to re-examine our own democratic practices within colleges of education. The lack of conversation between teacher education programs and administrative education programs would suggest that two separate professions exist. In many cases, we sustain a view that adminstration is a "move up" the hierarchy and now the role is to supervise and manage teachers, not work with them. In addition, the lack of collaboration between teacher education and educational adminstration professors compounded by the lack of emphasis on teaching and learning in the educational administration curriculum, communicates that school leaders are above and beyond the teaching and learning process. With that as a model, it is any wonder that our practitioners find barriers to their collaborative and participatory practices in school sites.

Educators who plan or instruct academic programs and professional training need to commit to a persistent discussion of how we socially construct our world. If people involved in schools are to practice and model the democratic values described by Calabrese (1990), values of equity, justice, integrity, inclusion, and participation, they must also have an increased awareness of the interconnecting relationship of behaviors surrounding knowledge, power, and influence. The results of the studies with the educational leaders in the network schools suggest that we can successfully develop school communities based on democratic values, but they also demonstrate Schattschneider's (1960) caution that these values require very hard work. I suggest that the practice and effects of democratic values in schools will not change appreciably or become any easier unless this conversation is constructed during the education of teachers and administrators.

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